

Forthnightly Sermon

By
JAMES VILA BLAKE
Minister Third Unitarian Church
CHICAGO, ILL.

VOLUME 1

NUMBER 13.

PAUL'S THREE POINTS.

CHICAGO
THIRD CHURCH PUBLISHING COMMITTEE, 917 WEST MONROE STREET
1889

Entered at the post-office at Chicago as second-class matter.

DECEMBER 1, 1889.

THE FORTNIGHTLY SERMON

Will be issued on the 1st and 15th of every month, containing Mr. Blake's current discourses in the pulpit of the Third Unitarian Church of Chicago. The series will comprise twenty to twenty-six sermons in the year, the number depending on whether the vacation months be omitted or not.

Price, postpaid, 50 cents a year. Per copy, five cents.

Address, THIRD CHURCH PUBLISHING COMMITTEE,
917 W. Monroe Street, Chicago, Ill.

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION IS SOLICITED.

MR. BLAKE'S BOOKS.

ESSAYS, Cloth,	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	\$ 1.00
POEMS, Cloth,	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.00
LEGENDS FROM STORY-LAND, Half-cloth,	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.00
MANUAL TRAINING IN EDUCATION,	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	.25
NATURAL RELIGION,	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	.05
THE FAMILY PURSE,	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	.02

Sent postpaid on receipt of price by Charles H. Kerr & Co., Publishers
75 Dearborn street, Chicago, Ill.

PAUL'S THREE POINTS.

I am to speak of Paul's three great points of belief and trust. Whenever any man accomplishes such a great work as Paul did, with such devotion, endurance, suffering, steadfastness, we may be sure he is under the power of some grand ruling ideas. For such things come not merely of an emotion; the waters are stirred by the angel of a thought. Paul lived daily with three dominant faiths filling his mind, which ruled him, inspired him, gave him force and devotion, and strengthened him to bear all his labors and sufferings by sea and land. These three beliefs were, first, that Christ was the Messiah, and was described and set forth in the Old Testament as the expected one of the Jews,—I mean that Jesus of Nazareth was the predicted King of Israel. This was one of the ruling and inspiring faiths of the great Paul. The second was that Christ would return to the earth soon, in a second coming or advent, to enter on his kingdom, since he had not taken it during his earthly appearance. Paul's third great belief was that Christianity,—which in Paul's mind was the acceptance of Christ as the Messiah, with all its consequences,—was not for the Jews only, but for mankind. These were Paul's three great points, which were to him the animating powers of all his enterprises, his prayers and his hopes.

Now these three thoughts of Paul contain two errors and one truth. These I will try to explain in the order of the points.

The first point, as I have said, was that Jesus was the Messiah, and was described in the Scriptures. The Scriptures herein, of course, mean the Old Testament Scriptures, for the

New Testament was not in existence. Paul constantly was enforcing this view, this animating faith of his. It appears continually in his writings. It looks forth, never ceasing, from the narratives of the Book of Acts; as, in the thirteenth chapter it is narrated that Paul at Antioch went into the synagogue, and when the readings were ended, the master of the synagogue said to him: "If thou hast anything to speak to the people, say on," and Paul, then rising, preached Jesus to them as the Messiah, and expounded from Moses and the Prophets that Jesus was the Messiah predicted in the Scriptures. This made a great stir in the town; but the next Sabbath day he did the same thing; whereupon many of the Jews banded together and complained of him, and drove him away from the city. Likewise at Thessalonica, as we read in the seventeenth chapter, he preached in the synagogue for three weeks; but at the end of this time the chief Jews would bear it no more, but made great uproar around the house of Jason; and Paul having escaped, they seized Jason himself and carried him before the Roman governor of the city, charging him with having harbored seditious men who preached rebellion against Cæsar. We read in the twenty-eighth chapter of Acts that, having come in person to Rome, Paul appointed a day when all the Jews of the city should gather in his house, or at least the chief rabbins and teachers among them; and they came, and Paul sat all day long, according to the story, expounding to them from Moses and the Prophets that Jesus surely was the one predicted, the Messiah who was to be received.

Now Paul was in error in this first point; and his error was twofold. First, Jesus did not conform to the Jewish expectation and dream of a Messiah. He was lowly, humble in his extraction, from a despised little town of a despised province, with no name, no ancestry, no magnificence. But the great Jewish king was to come with pomp and glory, to be of the lineage of David, and sit on a throne, retrieving the ancient magnificence of the Hebrews. Jesus came poor, without resources, having not where to lay his head, a wanderer on the earth, often driven about by furious crowds, his poor disciples helping as well as they could to minister to his needs. But the great prince who was to come was to be rich and powerful, full

of royal magnificence, of great wealth and resources, and go out to war against the Romans. Jesus also never showed any very national or clannish spirit. He loved the Samaritans as well as the Jews. He told his countrymen that to enter into the kingdom turned not on being of Jewish blood, but on living in a manner worthy of the kingdom; and that if so they did not, then they would be shut out, and many would come from the east and the west, the north and south, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the places left vacant by the unworthy children of the covenant. The truth is that the old Scriptures give no predictions of Jesus. They describe him nowhere. It was a false method of interpretation that enabled Paul to find any prediction of Jesus in these old sacred writings. This method of interpretation still survives. It is easy for anyone to find anything he will in any writing which he may interpret as he will, by his own canons. For there is but one sound interpretation, and one honest critical question, which is, What did the writings mean to a contemporary who heard them or read them? 'Tis certain that the Hebrews who heard Isaiah's songs or prophesyings understood no reference to Jesus of Nazareth, no, nor to anyone 500 years forward.

But here now I come to a great point. If Jesus was so contrary to all the Jewish hopes and ideas, and such a mortification to the pride of them, how and why was he accepted by the Apostles, and by Paul, the greatest genius among them, with such implicit loyal faith and love? Consider how he shocked all their prejudices; and they never were a match for their prejudices. To the end I doubt not Jesus was a lonely man, because he was not understood even by his own disciples. When he was in the very shadow of the cross, they were disputing with each other who should have the pre-eminence in his kingdom, to be his prime minister when he should come into his power. The answer to the question, How was it that they accepted him in spite of these great mortifications, is this,—His moral and spiritual impression was so unspeakable! To the very end the disciples were looking for a grand manifestation from him; and still he disappointed them; and still they believed, because of his mighty spiritual force.

This, then, was the first mode of Paul's error as to the alleged

prediction of Jesus in the Old Scriptures. But his error in this matter was still a deeper one, for it lay in his going to the written word at all. Friends and brethren, why struggle with anguish of thought and weariness of soul over ancient writings of prophets, singers and law-givers, until they be twisted or stretched or hammered into the model of this present time? Oh how much better to read them as they were, the inspiration of their own eras, living and throbbing with its sorts of feelings and worships and prayers! But not rules nor bonds for us in this era. Why decipher writings, though they be sacred? Why weave patterns of thought from songs, though the songs be holy? Why turn back the eyes over roads long traversed and well trodden, though beaten pathetically they be with the feet of men long gone, and wondrous and tender with sights and associations,—why? I say,—when before us, and at our feet, lies also the same ancient way,—that portion which we are to tread for ourselves,—and a long way too, which perforce we must go in and cannot stay if we would! Tell me, shall we not go in it the better, the more safely and gladly, yea, and with songs, yea, and with prophesy on our lips, shall we not?—if our eyes be set forward like our feet, and about our feet where now they tread, that we may see and rejoice in the present glory, the providence, the presence of God! Here let me take my stand; for if God be not here now, I must tell you he was never anywhere; and if he fail me in my need, though I be the humblest and most unworthy and most struggling, yea, and most sinful, then did he never come to anyone though he were the holiest and the greatest. Nay, holy lips have said that there is more joy among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons made perfect; and if there be joy in the dwelling of God over the victory, then is he present help for the struggle. Here I must stand; and I must say the great Paul was still in the bonds of the letter, from which I do believe with all my soul that, if now he were here, he would be free. And if happily I be free from it, 'tis no triumph nor monument of mine, to be graved with my name, nor of any other, to be graved with his name; but a temple of God not made with hands, to be filled with songs of praise. Yes, here I stand, and to that temple I must come, and I must enter, not boldly, and yet with no

dread. What evil ever can happen to me if I seek the good? Prophets, law givers, psalmists and singers, saints and holy men of old, who lived on Carmel, filled the wilderness with prayer, preached in Jerusalem, and hurled the bolts of the word of the Lord at treacheries and wrongs, I read you, I reverence you, I sit at your feet; but ye make not my religion, no, but my religion, and every man's, as it was in the beginning, now is and ever shall be, made you; and I shall not know you, and your words will be but stammering oracles or wild syllables if first I know not for myself the same heart of religion which is in you. Herein again doth the Master, the Nazarene, tower far above his great disciple, as Renan has written truly: "To appear for a moment, to reflect a soft and profound fulgence, to die very young, is the life of a god. To struggle, dispute, and conquer, is the life of a man. After having been for three centuries, thanks to orthodox Protestantism, the Christian teacher *par excellence*, Paul sees in our day his reign drawing to a close. Jesus, on the contrary, lives more than ever. It is no longer the Epistle to the Romans which is the epitome of Christianity—it is the sermon on the Mount. * * * What makes Christianity live, is the little that we know of the word and person of Jesus." This is because Jesus went first to the First; for God is first, and none can go to him second or through any other to learn what Jesus learned. He laid not the Old Scriptures on his head above him, as if piling them book on book therewith to be enlightened, till at last he was freighted with the heavy burden and went staggering over the earth; no, but he set the Scriptures, book on book, under his feet and climbed them, till standing on them, lifted far on their up-piled holiness, he could look with his eyes over the earth, see it, know it, and in it know the life of God. To his own soul he went, like as into a Holy of Holies. How often he could go therein, into the very inner place, who can tell? That great entrance was rare perhaps, as it was in the old ceremonial. Only once a year could the priest enter that sacred place. I know not whether it were so often as once a year, or but few times in thirty years, that the devout soul of Jesus found its way to the depths of itself. But it came out from that presence filled with divinity. Then he preached, not from the book, but from himself, and said that the pure in

heart should see God. What a certainty of nature is this! What fact! What assurance! Fathers and mothers, who together have looked on your children with wonder, with awe and love, all unspeakable, who each hath beheld himself in offspring and wondered much, and each hath beheld the other and wondered more, with love, and both of the wonderments full of religious fear,—tell me, do ye need writings wherewith to approach your children, or must one child give to another a writing that he may come to you? When were ye ever so far off that only through a verse, a scrip, a hope or thought or dream written down, your child could come to you? When were ye ever so much farther off that some humble one of your children could come to you only by a parchment from the hand of a greater one? Nay, when did they not fly to you all together, and directly with no intervention, yes, and the humblest, the slowest, the weakest first, the stronger making way for them that the more they might nestle in the father's arms or at the mother's heart, which were theirs by origin, by nature, by love and by their faith? Sit ye then thus, with your children close at your side and in your arms sheltered, and look ye up into the sky. There is the Infinite that bends over you, as the sky reaches down all around to the horizon, yea, and to our eyes rests on the earth and from its bright rim rears up the infinite arch of our abode. Stars play therein, and worlds without number, like children for very joy around him loud shouting and singing. Then cometh too a hush, which is Law, Love, Order, Perfection. Think of this; then turn thine eyes to man. As thou hast looked up to heaven, so now look down into the human heart which is spread like a sea underneath, wherein the stars shape themselves again if the waters be still, or are broken if the water strive in storms. What is the human heart? Who dare say he hath sounded it? Who dare describe it? Who dare tell what it is? Who hath measured around it? Who knoweth the power of its mysteries of love, of will, of joy and pain? Who hath written how these wrestle together and tear each other, or what peace lieth underneath them, to which the soul must go down at last, and there find the deep that calleth unto deep,—the deep of the earth, or of the child here placed, calling unto the deep of the heavens, or of the Father who is the heavens! Think of this, and then tell

me whether one of these hearts, though it be the struggling, tempted, erring, must have writings from another,—though it be calm and holy, before it may go straight and alone to the Infinite, the All-Holy, the Father? Must there be parchments from elders, prophets and sweet singers, before one soul shall know how to speak a prayer, or to pray what it can not speak? No. Whence is your love, ye fathers and mothers, who stretch out your arms and clasp closest the weakest, the most needy, the most frightened one of your children,—whence cometh that in you, but from God, who in like manner bendeth forward and hath naught between you and him!

" My child is lying on my knees ;
The signs of heaven she reads ;
My face is all the heaven she sees,
Is all the heaven she needs.

I also am a child, and I
Am ignorant and weak ;
I gaze upon the starry sky,
And then I must not speak :

For all behind the starry sky,
Behind the world so broad,
Behind men's hearts and souls, doth lie
The Infinite of God.

Lo ! Lord, I sit in thy wide space,
My child upon my knee ;
She looketh up unto my face,
And I look up to thee."

I come now to Paul's second point. The second great article of that faith of his which gave him such strength and devotion, was his belief in what is called the second coming, or second advent of Christ. The idea of a suffering and dying Messiah was the most fearful shock that the mind of a Jew could have received. And yet the moral and spiritual impression of Jesus triumphed over that too. Instead of seeing their great Master elevated, as they believed he would be, by some great popular

tumult, into a great reigning prince, re-establishing the kingdom in its ancient power and reigning in great glory, they saw him cut off by the most ignominious and painful death, on a Roman scaffold; and yet, I say, such had been his spiritual impression on them, that after a little, when the first shock and depression were over, and they came together again, they said, "Nevertheless, he *was* the Messiah!" And as they could not have a dead Christ, they dreamed a speedy second coming, and believed it implicitly. Paul's letters are full of it. "The time is short," he said, "the fashion of this world is passing away." In his letters to the Corinthians he says:

"Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

And, again, to the Romans:

"Knowing the time, that now it is high time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."†

To the Thessalonians Paul writes:

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we that are alive, that are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."‡ Paul argues that those who had died should be at no disadvantage by dying, because the Lord himself, he says, shall descend from heaven with an army and great glory, and first he will awake the faithful from their grave-bed, and then, all together, those that have been dead and those that still are living, shall be caught up to meet the Lord and his armies of angels in the air.

This was Paul's vivid dream. I doubt not at all that never

*1 Cor. 15. †Rom. 13. ‡1 Thess. 4.

he went to sleep at night but he thought that, before the morning dawned by the natural light, might come the morning of the kingdom, with its trumpet tones and glory of angels in the sky.

But Paul was in error in this dream. The fact followed not his vision. No splendid advent like to what he conceived took place in the sky; no trumpet sounded, no angels gathered, no spirits descended, no legions of spirits armed themselves, no banners waved nor throne was set, no heralds called to judgment; nor were the nations gathered, nor saints came with rejoicing nor the guilty with trembling; but all has been quiet to this hour—the sentinel stars aloft, the commanding sun in front of them, the changeable moon at peace, the obedient tides following; and all has been quiet to this day, to this day peace, order and quiet. Truly the great Apostle saw but a little way; nay, no farther than to the curtain of his own fancies, which hung heavy over his eyes; so that he looked not out of the window to see the universe moving in its divinity of order.

Yet this mistake of Paul is not a mere vain dream, a necromantic thought, a magical vision. It has a truth in it, namely, that we are safe whatever take place; yea, even if such trumpets sound in the sky, such legions descend, such tumults and convulsions upheave, and such a throne issue from them as the Apostle dreamed, still we are safe; for what could harm us? And in truth we know not what may happen to this little ball that now so merrily trundles our daily fortunes. This earth was once, so it seems written in the sky, a ball of fire; yes, and not even this, but a fiery vapor or mist, spreading we know not where in the heavens. And how this mist came we know not. What if it were the burning sprinkle through space, as some astronomers say, of two cold globes somewhere rushing together in an embrace that became fire! If thus the earth were, so it may be again. Who knows of it, either whence it came or whither it goes, or now how far it is on its way to the goal? This is one of the countless multitudes of things, like sands on the seashore, which we know not nor can know; which, notwithstanding, all together are not of the grandeur, splendor and joyfulness of some of the few things that we do know. For to know that in every hap the love of God reigns, and that naught can harm us wherein our ruling principle is kept pure—this is the knowledge

which is the gate called Beautiful to the sheltered places of the City of Peace. So did the Apostle think, for in another place in the Scriptures, in the book called the Second Letter of Peter, there is a notable description of the last day of the present world and of the new coming of the Messiah which Paul was so wrapped in. Here follows the passage:

"But, beloved, forget not this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Like to this, wherein indeed the old poet had the Apostle's description in mind, is a noble paeon from a Provencal poet, translated by our poet, Bryant:

"All things that are on earth shall wholly pass away,
Except the love of God, which shall live and last for aye.
The forms of men shall be as they had never been;
The blasted groves shall lose their fresh and tender green;
The birds of the thicket shall end their pleasant song,
And the nightingale shall cease to chant the evening long.
The kine of the pasture shall feed the dart that kills,
And all the fair white flocks shall perish from the hills.
The goat and antlered stag, the wolf and the fox,
The wild boar of the wood, and the chamois of the rocks,
And the strong and fearless bear, in the trodden dust shall lie;
And the dolphin of the sea, and the mighty whale, shall die.
And realms shall be dissolved, and empires be no more,
And they shall bow to death who ruled from shore to shore;
And the great globe itself, so the holy writings tell,
With the rolling firmament, where the starry armies dwell,
Shall melt with fervent heat—they shall all pass away,
Except the love of God, which shall live and last for aye."

I come now to Paul's third point of faith. And I do believe this inspired him more greatly than the other two. It was what I may call his universalism. You know there arose a great quarrel in the first church. It was between the Jew Christians and the Gentile Christians. The Jew Christians said: "You Gentiles, before you can be Christians, first must submit to the Jewish law and ceremonies; for Christ came to the Jews; therefore you must come first under the Jewish rites and law; and then you can become a Christian." Paul said: "No! these are 'beggarly elements.' I will have none of them. Come in freely, without any foreign rites, ceremonies and obligations, ye Gentiles." The Jew believers thought Christianity a thing inside of Judaism; Paul made it a *movement*, pressing out of Judaism to the whole world. His letters are full of this thought, and all his life was devoted to it. He wandered up and down the face of the earth to preach it, and to clasp the Gentiles to his soul.

In his letter to the Romans the Apostle says that God will render to every man according to his works; that *they* will find life and honor who by patience and well-doing seek for it, and that on every soul that worketh evil shall come sorrow and pain, not more to the Jew than to the Greek; and glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, as much to the Greek as to the Jew; for "there is no respect of persons with God." For, says the Apostle, "Not the hearers of a law are just before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these having no law, are a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith and their thoughts accusing or else excusing them one with another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."* Who art thou? exclaims the Apostle, and what manner of man art thou? If thou art a Jew and gloriest in the law, and art instructed out of the law, and yet so dost dishonor the law by thy evil deeds that even the Gentiles profane the holy name because of thee, I tell thee that thy being a Jew and keeping the ceremonies is well if thou do the law; but if thou transgress, thy ceremonies and sacrifices are naught,

*Rom. 2.

and the blood of Abraham is not in thee. And if one who is not a Jew and knows nothing of the temple rites, nor ever offered sacrifices, nor has submitted to ceremonies, does good works, shall not his Gentile blood be counted to him the same as Jew blood? Yea, though an alien, he shall be the same as a child of the chosen household. And if he, though not of the covenant, of the blood of Abraham, fulfill the law, I tell thee he shall judge thee who art Abraham's issue and doest evil. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

In an another letter, that to the Galatians, the Apostle assures them eloquently, that they are no longer under a tutor, nor are to be driven this way and that by any who may seek to pass them under the yoke of the law before they can be Christians. For ye are all sons, he says, and as many of you as have entered into the fold of Christ did thereupon put on Christ, so that no longer there can be Jew, nor Greek, nor bond, nor free, nor male, nor female, nor any differences whereby men are parted; but all are one in the fold of Christ. And if then ye belong to him, cries the Apostle, what is this but to be the same as the very seed of Abraham and heirs of the promise that was given him. And again in the 8th chapter of the Letter to the Romans, a very noble and great chapter, the Apostle tells them that as many as are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God; and that they must not be drawn into any bondage, to be fearful about ceremonies, or sacrifices, or names, or any outward things, but receive the spirit of adoption; for their very souls bear witness within them, and the voice of God within their souls, that they are the children of him. And if children, then heirs, as much as his Hebrew children, yes, and joint heirs with the Messiah himself, if they be willing to suffer with him, that with him also they may be glorified. If then thus ye Gentiles are called and God hath chosen you, as in truth he hath done from the beginning, and doth ordain you to be called in his own time, even as also he called the Jews—if then thus God is for you, who can be against you? Who can lay anything to your charge before him whereby to turn you away? Nay, hath not his son,

even Jesus the Christ, died, and now, being raised and ascended, maketh intercession? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Wherefore, cries the Apostle, in still another letter, to the Ephesians—Wherefore you Gentiles that once seemed afar off, now are made nigh, for Christ hath broken the middle wall of the partition and abolished the old enmity, even by his own flesh, having brought the Jew and the Gentile together into one body through the cross, and by his cross slain the enmity. And he preached peace to you that are far off as much as peace to them that were nigh, for both have access in one spirit to the same Father. So I tell you ye are not mere strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens, and of the household of God. And ye are made all together, Jew and Gentile, into a holy temple in the Lord, builded together for a habitation for God.

In writing to the Galatians he warns them with great feeling that he fears they are losinig the life of the spirit and being brought to sacrifices, ceremonies and rules, under the Jewish law. Away with such things! he cries to them; they were fit only for your time of bondage, when as yet ye were outside and knew not your sonship. But now that ye have come to know, "how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."†

Here was Paul's great truth. Oh, sometimes how must the most timid soul wish there were a Paul now to say these words to us, to our faithless, fearful churches, that have no confidence in truth, but must hedge round their thoughts by creeds and ex-

*Rom. 8. †Gal. 4.

clusions! Herein lay no error. Paul might err in explaining written texts, and reason falsely from them, as he did, against the laws of language and history; he might err in his dreams of blazing splendors at the Lord's coming in the sky; but in his all-embracing humanity and fellowship he builded on a rock. This wide and great doctrine of Paul, that the great good news of Jesus' life and devotion was not for the Jews only, but for the world, to be preached to the Gentiles—this, I say, because it was so great and wondrous a proclamation, brought him into great perils, yes, and sufferings of body continually during his years of toilsome journeys to preach his great Gospel. Wherever he went he preached, even in the synagogues, that Christianity was not a new sect of Jews, nor for Jews alone, no, but a wide religion, and for all mankind. But when he said such things, then the Jews set upon him, drove him from their synagogues time and again, reviled him, spurned him, beat him and stoned him, even pursuing him out on the highways between city and city, and leaving him for dead by the roadside. Once when he was in Jerusalem, some Jews of Asia Minor who happened to be there, recognized him as the troublesome, heretical, and seditious preacher who had made light of the laws and in their very synagogues opened his arms to the Gentiles. Whereat they stirred up the people and made a great outcry, shouting, Help, men of Israel! This is the man whom we found in our cities teaching against the law! And we read that "all the city was moved, and the people ran together, and they laid hold on Paul and dragged him out of the temple. And forthwith the doors were shut. And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came up to the chief captain of the band that all Jerusalem was in confusion. And immediately he took soldiers and centurians, and ran down upon them. And when they saw the chief captain and soldiers, they left off beating Paul. Then the chief captain came near and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and inquired who he was and what he had done. And some shouted one thing, some another, among the crowd; and when he could not know the certainty for the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd. For the multitude

of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.”* But when Paul thus was carried by the soldiers up the stairs he begged leave of the officer to speak, and so standing on the stairs beckoned with his hand and began to speak, not in Greek, but in Hebrew, the holy and ancient tongue, and the angry mob stood silent to listen. Whereupon Paul told them who he was and where born, and how at the feet of their rabbins he had been instructed strictly in the law, and that he was very zealous and had followed the new company of Christians with fire and sword. Then he narrated to them what had happened to him on the road to Damascus, and the blindness wherewith he was struck, and the manner in which he was healed of it; and then, at last, he spoke out bravely that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “Depart, for I will send thee forth from hence unto the Gentiles.” And, says the Scripture, they gave him audience unto this word, but then when he spake of going to the Gentiles, they shouted with a great outcry, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! It is not fit that he should live!” And they shouted and roared and threw their garments off, and cast dust into the air. Paul, in truth, had been a notable Jew, as he had told the people, and had gone raging up and down the land, beating the Christians and throwing them into prison, and had stood consenting to the death of Stephen; but when at last he believed, and embraced the new Gospel, then it was not as a Jew taking the new evangel into his old narrowness, as if he patched an old garment with new cloth, or put new wine into old goat-skins. No, but as a new man he took his new faith, not as a Jew, but as a man; and hence not for the Jews but for all men he opened his arms, to gather them all in, because God had made of one blood all the nations of the world, to walk on the face of the earth, and was not far from any one of them. Paul rescued his glorious Master from the hard fate of phrophts, which is that they soon become themselves tyrants like unto those they overthrow. For soon they that speak out of their own spirit, as Jesus did, and call on all men to do the same and to learn where they learned, which is in the holy quiet of their own souls,—soon these, I say, are set aloft by their disciples and crowns put on them that they may

*Acts. 21.

be adored with submission; and soon then they become law-givers instead of inspirers, and their disciples grow to a stern priesthood who put other men to fire and sword in their names. How did Luther wrestle with his followers that they should do even as he had done, and warned them that they were not to call themselves after him! Yet so, notwithstanding, would they do, and did; and now they are hardened into a sect which needs another Luther to overthrow the first and purge his work of tyranny. Paul stood like a bulwark for a time, yes, like a great wall that no thunders could shake and no lightnings of men's hatred shatter, in front of his Master, to shield him from the hard fate of being no more than the leader of another Jewish sect. When at last Paul was gone, and the apostles were gone, and all slept that knew the Master, the Jews scattered, their city sacked and burned, and their law a by-word and reproach, then, alas, the gospel of Jesus did become a tyranny; yes, and the very epistles of Paul a like tyranny, which helped to set the stones of the walls of the church to keep out Jews and all heretics and set bound again to the love of God. But the spirit of Paul wrestles with this bondage of the letter, as of old he did; and again he shall triumph, as of old he did; and again the universal truth and the human fellowship which was in him shall rescue the Master from sects and clans, from creeds, churches, sectaries, and all bondage of the letter, as of old it did; and once more man shall know that neither principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall separate man from the love of God, nor shall part men from one another, for that they are of one family in that love. What impiety greater than to bound the grace and love of God? Oh! how unspeakably vain it seems, how hard to conceive it, that any will think to bound the grace of God, shutting it profanely into one fold with gates of men's devices, or sealing it with one name or creed or church or method; as if men (I say it reverently) would label God with their titles, or mark the wolves and jackals of their bitter passions with the name of the Great Shepherd.

Thus I have tried to set forth, though by necessity briefly, these points of Paul, two errors and one truth. They all survive. Still the people are going to the writings, to the parchments, to the letter, for arguments, in all the churches. I know there are bursts and throbs of coming freedom, the freedom of the spirit within us,—God be thanked! And yet, still there are exclusions, hatreds, persecutions; and men go to the parchments for their religion. Still, also, many are looking for the second coming, and their sad hearts are spelling it out from the figures in Daniel. But, too, there are many successors to Paul, and many through the ages, never so many as now, striving to break down the partition walls, and bring men to one fold—howsoever they differ in forms, no matter—by the unity of the spirit. It is remarkable that the two errors are warring with the one truth, for it is the argument from the letter, from the scriptures, and the Messiah-dream of a miraculous Lord and King, that separate men.

The two errors shall be done away, the truth shall stay and grow. Gradually these grand scriptures, this glorious great Bible, so misused, and yet able to be so valuable and precious to us, shall cease to rule over man's reason, and then it will be the friend of his soul. Gradually the holy Nazarene will cease to be a Lord expected again with blare of trumpets and armed angels in the sky; and then he will be the wayfaring friend and teacher of men, a “quickening spirit.” And the truth of the great heart of Paul, the all-embracing humanity, the love, *that* shall prevail; and the earth will become a new Eden, men will walk new-made in the garden, nor will fear each other, nor any creature fear them, nor ravage any more. “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play at the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”*

*Isaih ix.

